

# INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND TRADE

*The United States has become increasingly involved in international issues that range from advancing and protecting U.S. political and economic interests to responding to global market forces and national and worldwide security threats. International Affairs and Trade helps the Congress address these issues by evaluating economic, political, and security problems worldwide.*

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## DESCRIPTION OF

## *our work*

International Affairs and Trade analyzes the effectiveness and management of U.S. foreign aid programs, evaluates the efficiency and accountability of the United Nations and related multilateral organizations, and assesses the strategies used to manage U.S. foreign affairs functions and activities. We also evaluate how trade agreements and programs serve U.S. interests and assess how the United States

can influence improvements in the world financial system and address crises. Another of our key efforts is to determine how effective federal agencies are in combating terrorism and preventing the proliferation of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons.

Our oversight responsibilities primarily include the State Department, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the United Nations, and some Department of Defense functions.

We focus on achieving the following outcomes:

- improving the current process for planning, executing, and coordinating U.S. military interventions;
- enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of foreign aid;
- increasing congressional understanding of the benefits and limitations of U.N. agencies;
- providing options for improving overseas operations, reducing costs, and decreasing security vulnerabilities;
- providing analysis and recommendations to improve the implementation of trade agreements, trade adjustment assistance, and trade promotion;
- recommending strategies to improve accountability at international financial institutions;
- offering analyses and options for the Congress to consider in debt relief funding requests; and
- suggesting methods of enhancing controls over exports of U.S. technologies that could facilitate the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

## INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND TRADE

### IMPACT OF

### *our work*

Our work takes us around the world in an effort to save money for the American taxpayer and to help individuals and U.S. businesses work more effectively. After we recommended that the State Department sell excess or underused overseas real estate, the department disposed of properties amounting to more than \$26.5 million—money that can be used to meet other State Department real estate needs. In Africa, we investigated the AIDS epidemic to provide advice to the United Nations on the best information to give to Africans to help combat AIDS—advice that led to a revision of U.N. information about this epidemic. As a result of our work on the federal government's multiple export promotion programs, the many agencies involved in this work agreed on common definitions that will help them pinpoint and coordinate their activities. Also, in analyzing the World Trade Organization's dispute settlement system, we showed that U.S. business has gained more than it has lost in U.S. participation in the system. Using this information and other data, the House of Representatives voted to remain in the Organization.

## HIGHLIGHTS OF RECENT and *future projects*

### *National and International Security Threats*

- Federal and U.N. efforts to alleviate the HIV/AIDS epidemic in sub-Saharan Africa
- Security reinforcement and construction of U.S. embassies
- Counternarcotics efforts in Colombia, Peru, and Mexico
- Reducing Russian arsenals of weapons of mass destruction
- Funding rule of law reforms worldwide
- NATO expansion

### *Trade Agreements*

- Issues concerning the North American Free Trade Agreement and the World Trade Organization
- China's compliance with its World Trade Organization commitments
- Biotechnology and trade
- Access to markets in Japan and China
- U.S.-Mexico border issues
- Trade adjustment assistance

### *Peacekeeping*

- Protection of and assistance for internally displaced persons
- Costs of U.N. peacekeeping missions
- NATO's mission in the Balkans

### *International Financial Institutions*

- Debt relief for low-income countries
- Foreign assistance to Russia, Colombia, and Haiti
- Reforming management practices in the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund

### *Foreign Assistance*

- Food aid for Russia and North Korea
- Compact of Free Association with the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands